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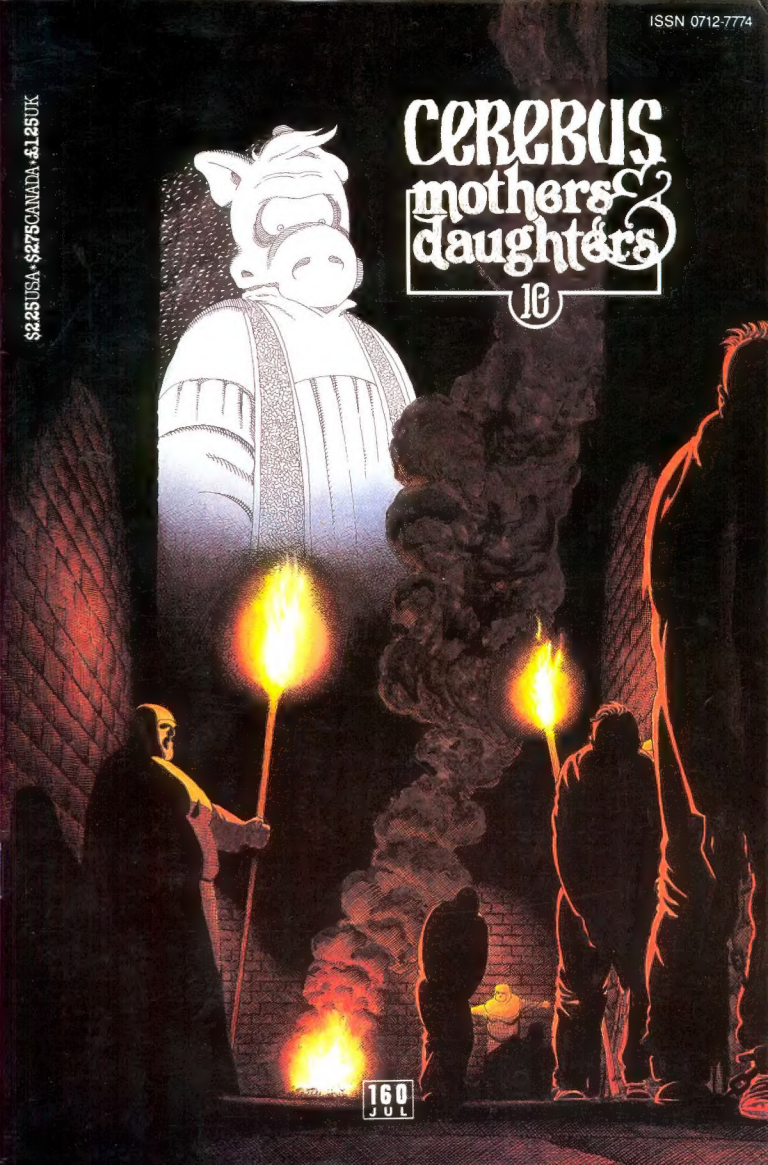
CEREBUS
mothers & daughters
10



160
JUL

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

America's heartland, the Midwest, continues to be the place that is really making the Tour happen.

★★★★★★★★★★

Very large and very enthusiastic turn-out at *Clint's Books, Comics and Video* in Kansas City. Rick Jarvis had had only one previous signing in his store; a big-name Marvel guy who had been there most of the day a couple of years ago and who had attracted a total of three fans. Rick had joked that if I had the same kind of turn-out, he was going to get me to run the cash register or bag some comics out back. Not this time. It was another "over-time" appearance that ran almost four hours (another half hour to sign books and do sketches for the store employees and the people who couldn't make it in). Although we didn't have time to sic Lekas & Levine on KC, we still got a very nice write-up in *Pitch* and a wonderful "Critic's Choice" from Dave Leonard (Hi, Dave) in *The New Times*.

Large and enthusiastic turn-out at the Kansas City Great Eastern Convention (including several people who had driven two or three hours to get there) and I met Rich Corben at last! A wonderful guy. I had planned a day trip up to Independence to see the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library (including his reconstructed Oval Office with the original "The Buck Stops Here" sign on the desk) but no such luck as Lekas & Levine phoned to tell me that

★★★★★★★★★★

The *Star Tribune* in Minnesota wanted a drawing of Cerebus for the paper (the Twin Cities' largest daily). A forty dollar (!) cab ride downtown for art supplies and a couple of hours at an improvised drawing board and I Fed Exed the finished drawing from the Bloomington Marriott to Minneapolis on Friday. A week later there it was and there I was, in Minneapolis. By all accounts it was unprecedented coverage for a cartoonist in the *Star Trib* (except for native son Charles Schulz, of course). Also the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and *Skyway News* and a pleasant ten minutes or so on Steve Cochrane's morning show on KDWB. I did a sketch of Cerebus on their "celebrity wall" right next to Hammer's autograph (he spelled Hammer right; I checked). Then, a quick interview on the local ABC outlet's Noon News (a busy news day; but my interview bumped an item about Magic Johnson's wife having a baby. Bonus!). Then an interview for the local FOX outlet's *10:30* segment (right before *Star Trek*) where I was informed that the segment would run on Monday, so I had to pretend the signing and convention had already happened. The interviewer even asked on camera "I saw all these young girls throwing themselves at you. Does that happen all the time?" "Well, not when I'm at home; that's why I'm on the road a lot." Surreal.

I can't thank Greg Ketter enough for all his help in getting me around to the various interviews and all the work that he and Alan (Hi, Alan) put into promoting the *Dreamhaven* appearance which ran almost five hours, leaving the *Moondogs* record intact, but *barely*. Oh, and Reed Waller dropped by to say hello (Hi, Reed).

The next day, Laura and Ralph were genial hosts at Minneapolis' other "A" store *The College of Comic Book Knowledge*. Wonderful store and the best free dinner I had all day.

The Great Eastern Convention at the Marriott was up against an Employment Expo for the M*A*L*L O*F A*M*E*R*I*C*A, one of those West Edmonton fiascos they're building to siphon every last local penny into someone's H. Ross Perot-size pockets. Friday and Saturday they were turning people away from the parking lot, it was so full and I thought, "Oh, swell." But we had a great turn-out again — busy from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. A hotel waiter even came by and said (with a very puzzled look on his face) "Potato Salad for Most Holy." Some kind soul had sent two heaping bowls of potato salad to our table. All who partook pronounced it (Filgate-like) "Grate. Grate p'tata salad."

★★★★★★★★★★

I can't tell you about Albany, because it's 8:40 p.m. on June 20 and Mitch Cohn isn't coming to get me for the *Midnight Comics* signing for another half hour. Ger just phoned to say that they've re-routed him through Detroit cause his plane broke, which is why we aren't in the bar drinking. Bissette's en route from New York City and I'm here all by my lonesome and I've already read *Metroland*; Albany's alternative newspaper from cover to cover (including Mark Daly's wonderful "Original Sim" article). I toy with the idea of answering one of the sleazier "Women seeking Men" phone mail ads ("That's me on page 17; what are you doing around 1 a.m.?") and decide against it. I have to be up at 8 for the con.

★★★★★★★★★★

Of course, in between Minneapolis and Albany was the *Diamond Seminar* in Baltimore. Turn to page 21, for the first ever Note From The President continued . . . You can read the story first if you like.

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CEREBUS

NO. 160 JULY 1992

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS
a novel

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BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 151 to Cerebus 162)
Flight

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 163 to Cerebus 174)

•

BOOK THREE
(Cerebus 175 to Cerebus 188)

•

BOOK FOUR
(Cerebus 189 to Cerebus 200)

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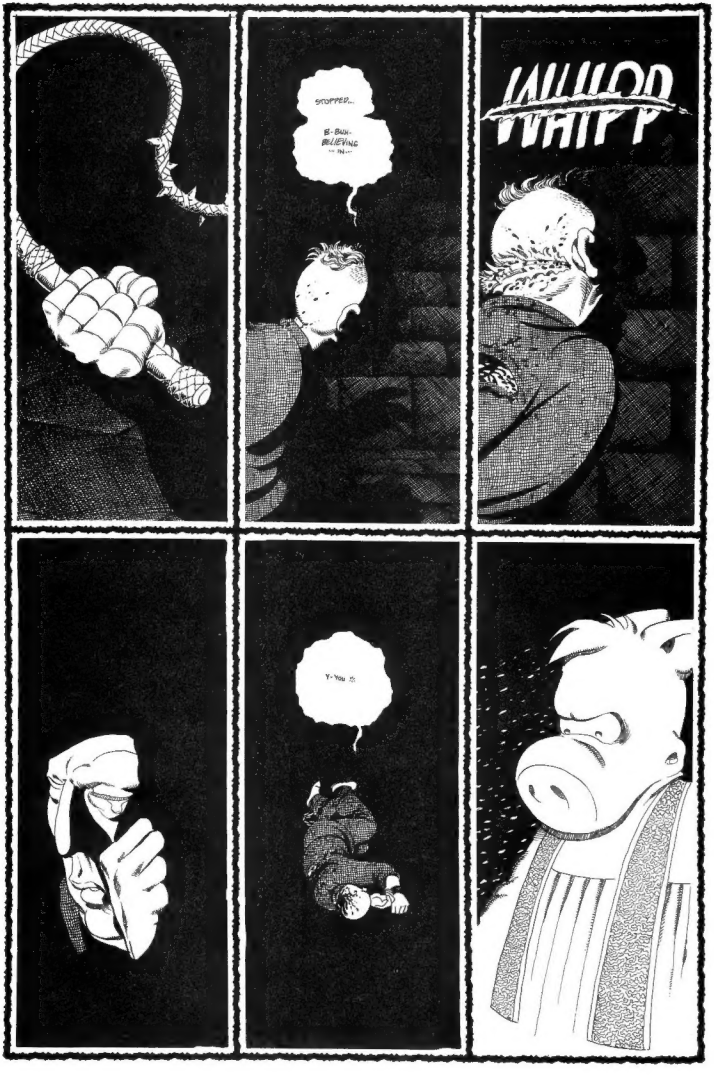
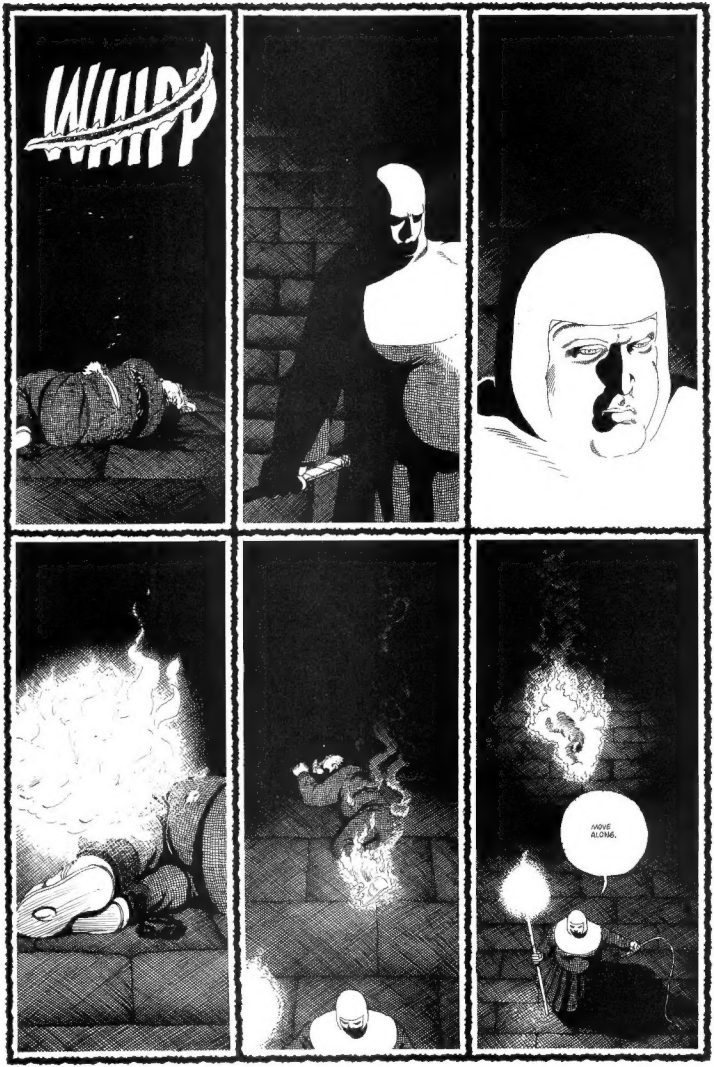
One of the gold coins suddenly blazes with life again, pulsing with an inner radiance and hurling from it a shower of golden particles which appear to swim upward through the murky waters in random patterns; weaving, co-mingling. Then vanishing as quickly as they had appeared.

PRISONER!
YOU HAVE R-RETURNED TO F-FUH-FULFILL THE P-P-PUH-PROPHECIES ...
YOU HAVE COME TO SUH-STRIKE THE SH-SHACKLES FUH-FROM OUR L-L-LIMBS
TO S-SMITE OUR OPUH-OPPRESSORS
UNH!
I N-N-NUH NEVER ...

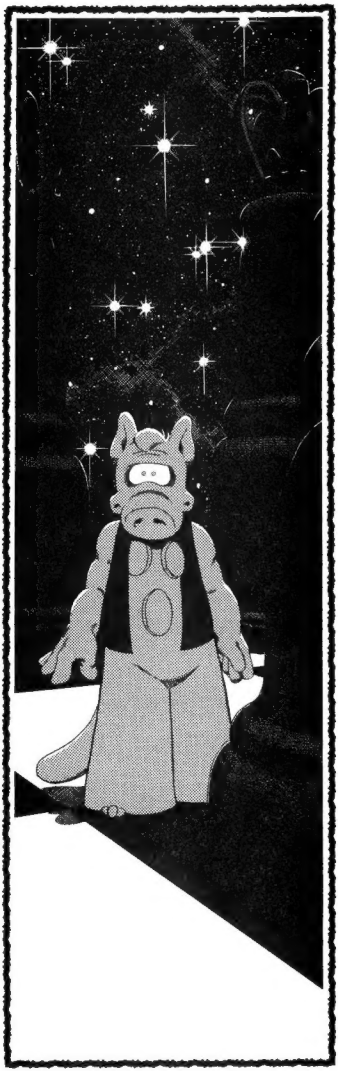

STOPPED...
B-BUH-BELIEVING "IN"...
Y-YOU ☆


WHIPP
MOVE ALONG.

The hardest lesson for the Reformer to learn is that he chooses not whom he inspires, nor does he choose the form and the substance of that inspiration. To you, Archbishop Posey was a mere functionary of the Eastern Church and since your first meeting at the time of your investiture as Pontiff, you have scarcely given his existence a second thought. But it was he who was the most profoundly affected by you. You came to him in a dream some weeks ago and beckoned to him. A life-long coward, his belief in you as an incarnation of the Living Tarim overcame his fear. He fled the Sequester of the Church in the Upper City to search for you, praying fervently to Tarim to guide him in his quest, to be by your side, whether in victory or in martyrdom. He was arrested half a block from Dino's Cafe and sentenced on the spot to two years of hard labour. Against all reasonable expectations, he had survived these weeks of incarceration, his body bruised and weighted by exhaustion, but his spirit unbroken; unshakable in his conviction that you were the Redeemer and that you would return and fulfill the prophecies.

He died happily and at peace.

Because of you.



At an early age, I evinced interest in the primitive gold-smithing tools in my father's small workshop. Ours was a small and impoverished village and there was little gold to practice on except the gold coins which served, as they do to this day, as the foundation of each family income in Iest; whether entrusted to a patriarch in the Lower City or to a matriarch in the Upper City. One side of the coin is struck with the emblem of the local governor at the time it is issued. The other side is blank and is traditionally carved with a symbol of the family who possesses it. I grew adept at carving these symbols, each more elaborate than the last and soon families were coming from neighbouring villages to have my design added to their coins. I learned to scrape traces of gold from the coin to melt and use as inlay. I invented new tools for engraving finer lines and patterns. A devout Tarimite, I carved His Name in ancient Pigtish rune letters on each coin brought to me. Healers and apothecaries began using the coins in their treatment of family ailments. Miracles were spoken of in hushed whispers and soon more people came from the larger villages and then from the City itself; nobles, lawyers and merchants. As whispers became words and words became legend, the coins seemed imbued with the belief of the people made manifest. Priests of the Eastern Church grew jealous of this faith; felt their influence and control of the population waning with each passing day in Rivershire Province and elsewhere. They took their case to Suenteus Po III, informing him that I was building a kingdom within Iest and that I had declared my family carvings as more worthy of loyalty than the governors' emblems on the obverse.

When they came to arrest me, I knew this had all transpired before many times; as if I was an actor in a play. I remembered my life as Suenteus Po I. As they read the indictment I had the curious sensation that I was imprisoning myself.

As they led me away, there was a flurry of resistance and some blood was spilt. I told my defenders to stand back; not to make it any worse than it already was. They complied and I could see from their expressions that they, too, now felt like actors in a play.

Many of them wept openly.

I was brought before Suenteus Po III, a bloated caricature of his father; my son, Alfred. He was amused by my threadbare appearance, my regional dialect. The mages and charlatans who held posts in his Illusionist court were amused as well; they felt that the priests of Tarim had finally lost their minds, seeing a threat in this misshapen peasant. Their questions had a comic turn to them. I answered each question as simply and as honestly as I could. I felt I was part of the joke and that soon they would tire of me as an amusement and I would be set free; though what my fate would have been, then, I have no idea.

But, Po III was seized with the thought of enlargening the jest. He asked if I carved only coins that were minted in the Lower City. No, I said, a number of them had been brought to me by representatives of the Great Ladies of the Upper City. He asked if I felt no qualms as a good Tarimite in crafting coins with the Goddess on them. I admitted that it had troubled me, but I felt that the Word of Tarim should be given freely everywhere and paid witness to. He turned then to his senior advisors and asked what they thought Great Andrena, leader of the Council of the Goddess in the Upper City might think of my heresy. There was much levity at the very prospect.

The play had resumed its course.

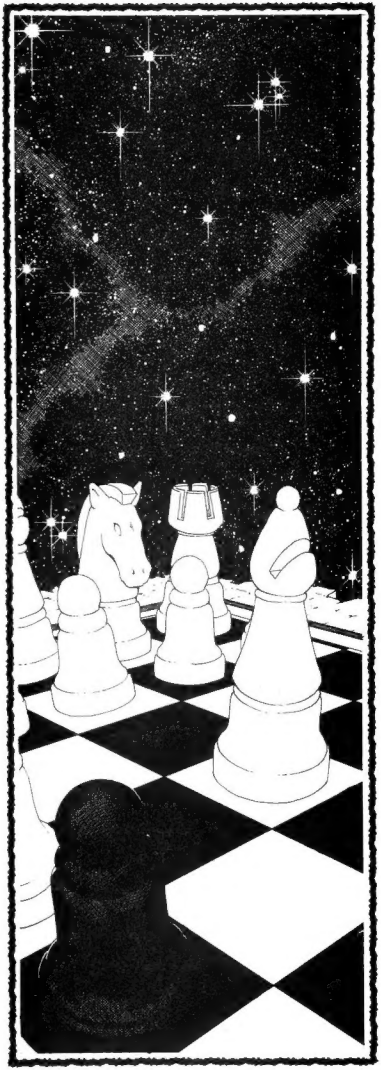
He asked if I had any further words for the illustrious body before me. I said nothing. He informed me that arrangements would be made to transfer me to the custody of the Guardians of the Upper City. With a theatrical gesture, he drew forth a small bowl of scented water and dipped his fingers lightly into it.

I wash my hands of you,
he said, and I was led away.

That night I was led before Great Andrena. There is no need for me to relate our conversation; the course of the Trial. You experienced it yourself when you tried Astoria as Pope.

You didn't sentence her to death. Events intervened and you ascended instead.

This gives us small cause for hope, does it not?

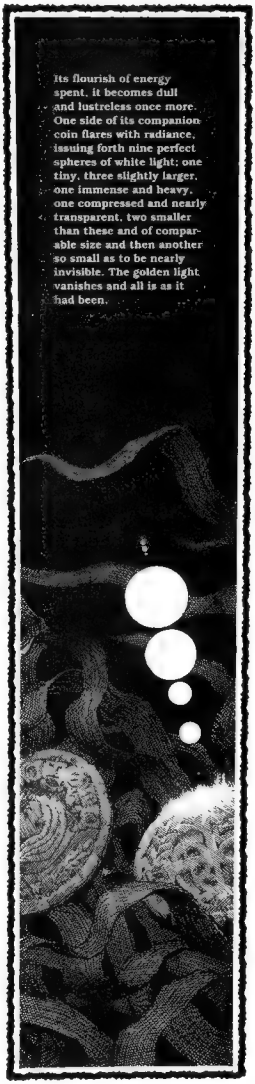


I was taken to a courtyard in a small prison attached to the Council Building. The charges against me were read again and then the fagots were lighted and I was burned as a heretic.

My experience taught me that there is no benefit and little wisdom in attempting to influence the minds and the wills of the mass of people. In both my lives I have described to you, I sought that kind of influence and effect; I was a Reformer. In my succeeding lives, I have seen the long-range effects that profound change always brings about. Each Great Movement is sown with the seeds of its own destruction; its corruption and decay as inevitable as Death itself. In each succeeding life I've led, after leaving my parents' house, I have sought a simple and uneventful existence. My quarters are always mean and rudimentary; a bed where I might sleep, a table where I might eat and a chair for sitting on. At this moment, I live in a one room apartment in Iest's Lower City. I have no friends and no contact with any of my relatives. My one luxury is a crude chessboard, made from a discarded packing crate; the pieces carved by hand from scraps of firewood.

Queen's bishop to King's Bishop Four.

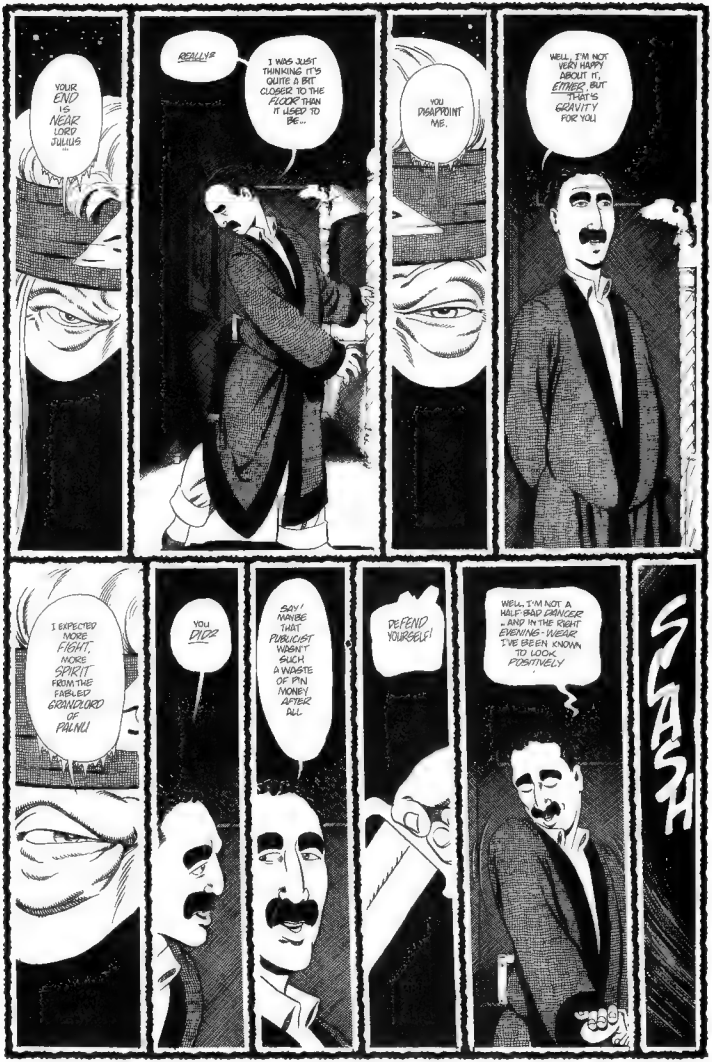
Its flourish of energy spent, it becomes dull and lustreless once more. One side of its companion coin flares with radiance, issuing forth nine perfect spheres of white light; one tiny, three slightly larger, one immense and heavy, one compressed and nearly transparent, two smaller than these and of comparable size and then another so small as to be nearly invisible. The golden light vanishes and all is as it had been.

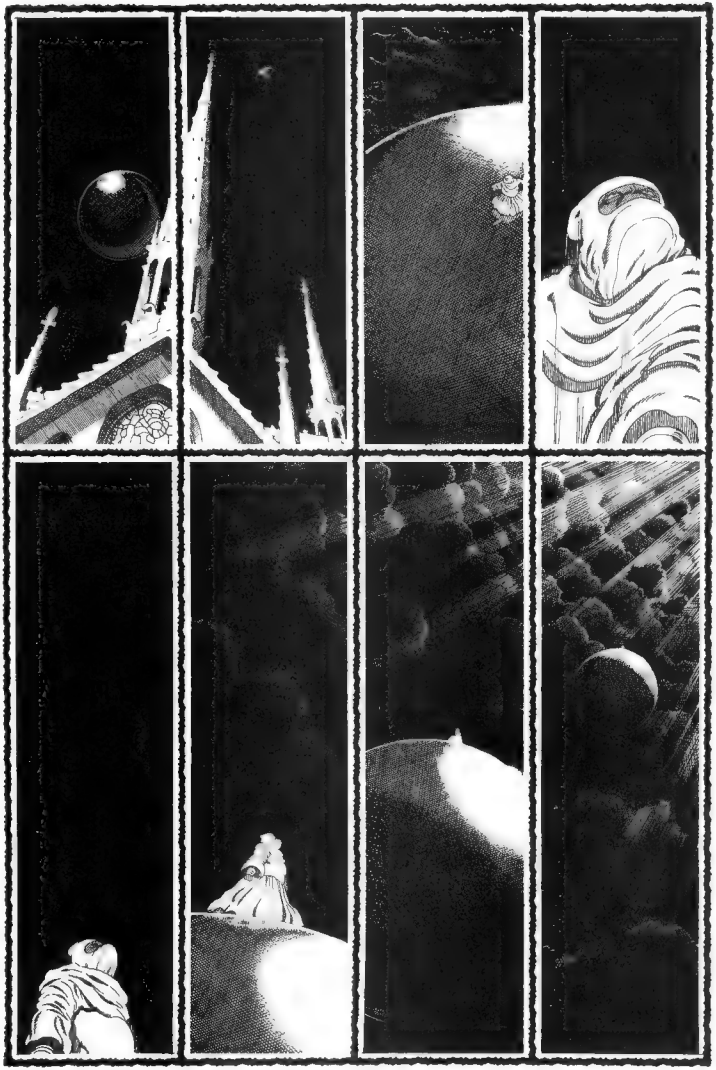


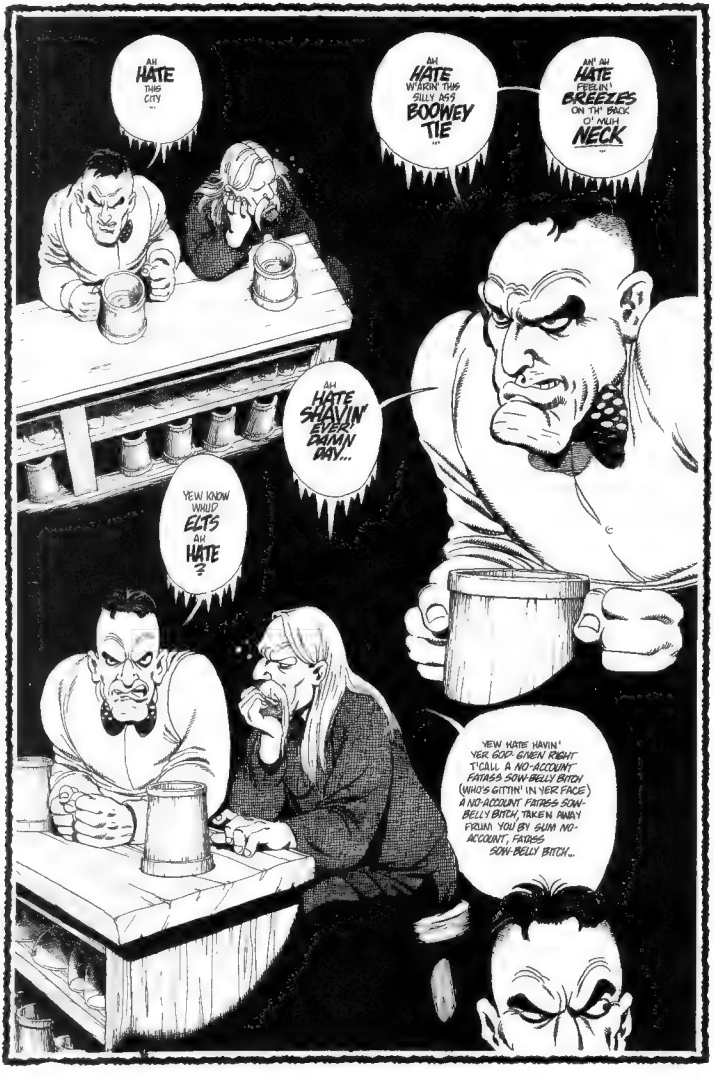
IT LOOKS LIKE OLD ELROD GOT HIMAH NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON!
YOU LOOK AH-MAY-- YOU LOOK LIKE A POSTER BOY FO' TH' ULCER OF TH' MONTH CLUB!
NOT LISTENING
NOT NO
'STRESS ROACH' THAT IS--
WHAT Y'ALL NEED IS A LITTLE 'ARE' AN 'ARE'
NO LISTENING
NO
'RUTTIN' AN' RELAXATION'
NO NOT NO NOT
NO
NOT LISTENING NOT
YESSAH! NOTHIN' SAYS LOVIN' LIKE A SELF-LUBRICATIN' OVEN!
TUNA PIE, THAT IS
SO WHUT SAY WE SCOOP OUR SELVES A COUPLE O'HUNDRED POUNDS O'ROACHLANDS GRADE DOUBLE 'A' PRIME BIMBO FLESH--
AN' HAVE US A HORIZONTAL RODEO!
LISTENING
SPIT IT OUT-- SON - WHUT HAVE Y'GOT T'SAY F' Y'SELFE
NOT NOT NOT!
LISTENING!
LISTENING
NOT NOT NOT
SPEAK UP, SON!
EVERYTHIN'S TWITCHIN' BUT NOTHIN'S MAKIN' IT PAST Y' LARYNX!

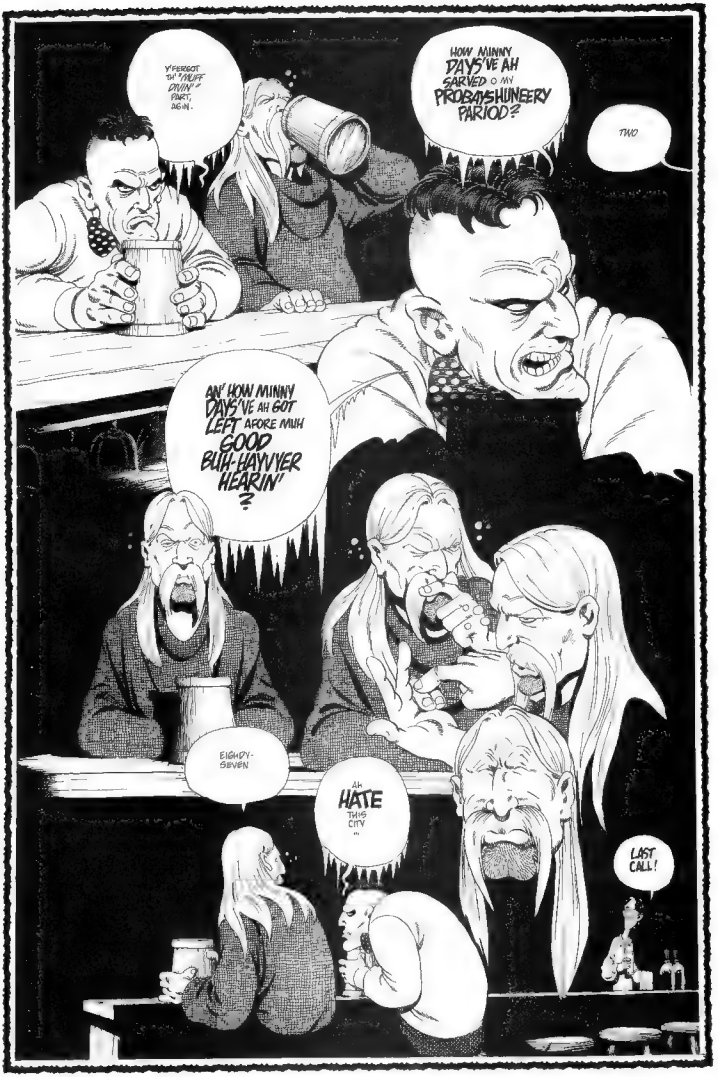
I--
CAN'T
OH
HO!
NOT
ENOUGH
AH SAY-
NOT ENOUGH
STARCH
IN YO'
LINGUINI,
HUH?
WELL Y'ALL
JEST LEAVE IT
TO DOCTOR
ELROD...
AH'VE GOT
JEST-TH'
THANG
RAIGHT
HYAR
FILTHY-
AH SAY
FILTHY
LOWER
FELDAN
POST
CARDS!
OH
AH'S
HM
"WHAT THE
MAID SAW"
"NAUGHTY
FELLATANE"
AH KNOW
IT'S HYAR
SOMEPLACE
AHHA!
CUCUMBER
QUEEN!
SPLURT

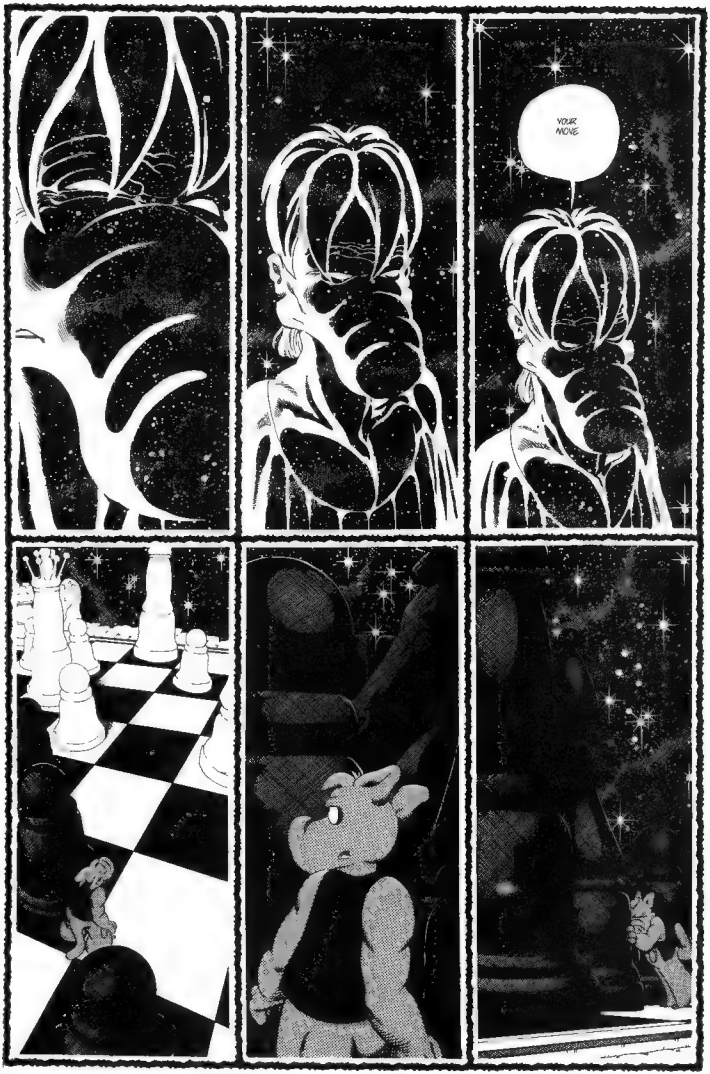
SOL! WHO ARE YOU?
HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE
AND WHY AREN'T YOU BETTER LOOKING?
NO ONE CAN STOP THE EYE IN THE PYRAMID LORD JULIUS ...
WE ARE AS SMOKE
WE ARE YOUR SHADOW
WE ARE EVERYWHERE
HMM YOU'RE ...LIKE SMOKE ... YOU'RE MY SHADOW AND YOU'RE EVERYWHERE
ARE YOU BIGGER THAN A BREAD BOX?
WE ARE THE HAMMER OF VENGEANCE
WE ARE THE INSTRUMENT OF THE GODDESS' DIVINE RETRIBUTION
WE WILL CRUSH YOUR BLOATED AND LEECHING CITY-STATE LIKE AN INSECT...
OH! SO YOU ARE BIGGER THAN A BREAD BOX.


YOUR END IS NEAR LORD JULIUS ...
REALLY?
I WAS JUST THINKING IT'S QUITE A BIT CLOSER TO THE FLOOR THAN IT USED TO BE...
YOU DISAPPOINT ME.
WELL, I'M NOT VERY HAPPY ABOUT IT, EITHER, BUT THAT'S GRAVITY FOR YOU.
I EXPECTED MORE FIGHT, MORE SPIRIT FROM THE FABLED GRAND LORD OF PALNU!
YOU DIDZ
SAY! MAYBE THAT PUBLICIST WASN'T SUCH A WASTE OF PTN MONEY, AFTER ALL.
DEFEND YOURSELF!
WELL, I'M NOT A HALF BAD FENCER ... AND IN THE RIGHT EVENING-WEAR I'VE BEEN KNOWN TO LOOK POSITIVELY
SLASH




AH HATE THIS CITY
AH HATE W'EARIN' THIS SILLY ASS BOOWEY TIE
AN' AH HATE FEELIN' BREEZES ON TH' BACK O' MUH NECK
AH HATE SHAVIN EVERY DAMN DAY...
YEW KNOW WHUT ELTS AH HATE ?
YEW HATE HAVIN' YER GOD- GIVEN RIGHT T'CALL A NO-ACCOUNT FATASS SOW-BELLY BITCH (WHO'S GITTIN' IN YER FACE) A NO-ACCOUNT FATASS SOW-BELLY BITCH, TAKEN AWAY FRUM YOU BY SUM NO-ACCOUNT, FATASS SOW-BELLY BITCH..


Y'FERGOT TH' MUFF DIVIN' PART, DEAN.
HOW MINNY DAYS'VE AH SARVED O MY PROBASHUNEERY PARIOD?
TWO
AN' HOW MINNY DAYS'VE AH GOT LEFT AFORE MUH GOOD BUTH-HAYVYER HEARIN'?
EIGHTY-SEVEN
AH HATE THIS CITY ...
LAST CALL!


YOUR
MOVE

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

CONTINUED

I arrived at the Diamond Seminar around dinner-time on Saturday and had a little something to eat in my suite at the Hyatt Regency while I watched the Detroit Tigers beat up on the Baltimore Orioles on the tube (Toronto had lost earlier in the day, leaving them .004 behind the O's). By the time it was 7–1 I thought things were pretty well in hand and made my way downstairs to the Opening Reception, sponsored by Dark Horse

It must be genetic at the point, because the first two familiar faces that I saw were (same as in Madison a month earlier), John Christian of *Paper Heroes* and Martin *(Hepcats)* Wagner. We chatted a little bit while I registered at the desk. Things had gone very well for Martin at the seminar sale earlier in the day. He ended up being the only artist to show up and sign auto-graphs for the retailers (attaboy), moving a lot of Diamond's *Hepcats* inventory in the process. He reported a very positive reaction from the retailers, particularly since his new issue had just shipped and he could tell them he was hard at work on the next one

I made my way through the Ballroom handshake by handshake, in search of the bar, where I got a Diet Coke (although I had finished the speech I was going to give just before lunch on Sunday, it still needed some touching up and I wanted a clear head for that). Mike from Diamond (third runner-up in the Billy Dee Williams look-alike contest) cornered me and told me that he was doing video-taping of the entire seminar and would I be willing to do an on-camera interview I always like these things to have more than a little alliteness attached to them, so I suggested that he film me just standing still and looking around, whereupon I would "discover" the camera and start edging away while he tries to follow me. By the time we got to the doors to the ballroom, we were both rolling on the floor. He set up his camera a few minutes later out in the lobby and we did an interview that went very well, I thought, confronting the whole "Diamond controversy" of 1988 head-on. I then chatted with a number of retailers who were kind enough to come up and introduce themselves, chatted a bit with Steve Koch, thanking him for the great appearance he set up at *Comic Headquarters* (again) at the St. Louis stop. Got a full report from veteran Bill Liebowitz on *Warzone: Golden Apple* (the L.A. riots experience) and met and fell in love with (along with everyone else) Susie Owens, the Golden Apple "Flaxen" Lady (Susie, I will have the drawing done for Shauna Darlene in time for the signing in Killeen in December). A number of Diet Cokes later, it was time to answer a call of nature and I made my way to the Gents. I was just unburdening myself, when I look to my left, and there, for the first time in ten years, face-to-face, is Steve Geppi. We (along with everyone else in the vicinity) cracked up. What a great leveller of the male human condition. We strolled back out, reminiscing about the 1982 Tour when he had met Deni and I at the airport, driving us into Baltimore in his van. I mentioned the Jays–O's rivalry and he rolled his eyes. The Tigers game had ended 15–1. I confess I chortled in a most unbecoming fashion. It was a source of great amusement to see all of the chins hitting the floor as people strolled past ("Did you see that? Did you see *that*?"). I said I hoped he would be there for my speech the next day and he assured me that he would be front row center. Time for a little more chatting and thanking host Mike Richardson and then it was upstairs for a quick cut-and-paste on the speech.

The next morning, I paced up and down in the suite, re-reading and re-re-reading the twelve pages of text, anguishing about whether to leave in the "There are a lot of you here today . . ." paragraph (what if they start throwing things before I get to the punchline?). The clock crawled painfully towards High Noon so I went down to pace in front of the Ballroom doors a while, finally taking my place at the front of the room (a sea of retailers in a space the size of a football field) as Steve finished answering the last few questions in the Diamond Dialogue session and then he introduced me (he had told me the night before that he had thought of bringing a couple of sets of boxing gloves to bring out as he introduced me I wish he had. I think it would've gotten a big laugh).

And then there I was.

I hit the line about "what scum you are . . ." and there was one of those big, Ice-Breaking Laughs that public speakers dream about and I knew everything was going to be okay. I ran about eight minutes over the half-hour scheduled time, pausing only long enough to shake hands with Bill Neuhaus and Steve Geppi before I bolted from the room. Lunch in my suite consisted of and meat-trauma diet 48 hour Diet Pepsi's, nine cigarettes and a lot of deep-breathing exercises.

The afternoon session in the Exhibit Room went really, really well. Beyond Martin's and my expectations, for sure. We were literally mobbed through the entire day. I had noticed in Madison that there is a difference between meeting fans and meeting retailers. With fans you'll get every fifth or sixth one with a really firm handshake, but with retailers you are dealing with business people, where a firm handshake is the first order of business, ranging from firm, firmer, firmest, to wrench-your-arm-half-way-out-of-its-socket. Getting them excited with a speech (I discovered) cranks it up a few notches. By the end of the day I was warily regarding the appendage from which my livelihood issues, swollen to almost twice its size and a funny reddish purple colour. No complaints though.

Colleen showed up a little late, having driven in from Shelton's Heroes Convention in North Carolina with her mum (she does have a name besides Colleen's mum, I found out; Anita). Colleen settled in quickly after a hug and a kiss, with her *Aria Press* handouts and a flier for Jo Duffy's *Blue Sky Blue* publishing and we were off; Martin doing a head-sketch in the upper right corner of the print and then handing off to Colleen and I, me doing a sketch and autograph on the left side while Colleen did a sketch and autograph on the right-hand side. Should-to-shoulder, drawing on the same piece of paper. Had it been anyone besides Colleen and myself, you might even describe it as romantic.

Finished at last, I went up to the suite for a quick meeting with Gary Colabuono and the DL about *Project Moondog* (see elsewhere in this issue) and then Martin, Colleen and Anita Mum came up and we decided to go out for a relaxing dinner. Fabulous restaurant, the divine Ms. Doran resplendent in a multi-coloured lamé jacket that turned heads and dropped jaws left and right, etc. etc. Colleen found a pearl in one of her oysters and Martin got to experience for the first time the full range of the Doran tapestry; snarling hardass, coy southern girl, charming artisan, sparkling wit, castrator of weaklings ("Martin, my lad, if she didn't exist, we'd have to invent her").

We arrived back at the Hyatt in time for the post-Gem awards party. The first person I met was Phil Nutman, editor of *Inside Comics*. "Dave, congratulations on your award." Award? He was much amused. "You mean, I'm the first one to tell you? You won a Diamond Gem Life Achievement Award." I found Steve Geppi as quickly as I could. He grinned. "You missed it. We give you an award and you're meeting with the goddamn DL." No. No. That was all wrapped up by six-thirty I was out for dinner with Colleen . . . . er and Martin and Colleen's mum. He looked doubtful.

It's true, Steve. Blame it on the redhead.

We had our picture taken together and then I grabbed his arm and steered him toward the elevator for a quick trip up to the suite, liberating a couple of Lite Beers from the mini-bar (all us Old Fucks drink Lite Bear, eh?) And there we sat, talking about comics and baseball, Diamond and baseball, self-publishing and baseball. After about twenty minutes the phone rang. "Hi this is Steve Geppi's girl-friend. Is-Steve-Up-There?" The jig was up. They found you, Steve.

It was a great night, everyone congratulating me on the speech, no one letting me pay for my drinks (or GET them myself for that matter). I switched to Coor's Lite at one point and who should come up, but Neil Johnson of *Emerald City Comics*. I laughed, pointing to my can of Coor's Lite, my first one of the evening. He looked confused and I realized that 158 was still at the printer's so I explained about Chad Rivard's letter and my answer and then it was *his* turn to laugh.

I sat up most of the night in the suite, drinking like a fish, smoking like a chimney and just staring out at the harbour lights through the floor to ceiling windows, thinking, Man, it doesn't get any better than this.

Next day in the exhibit room, we were swamped again from the opening bell. A couple of funny incidents happened. We got out-of-synch on one of the prints, so Martin and I tried drawing on one at the same time, him on the left side, me on the right. We couldn't do it; the head sketches were twisted in the turmoil very and we could barely spell our names and then Colleen had the same problem putting her head sketch on the left. We could only console the poor retailer that while he had the worst drawings of anyone, he did have a genuine, one-of-a-kind item.

The second incident. The three of us were getting pretty silly when people were taking pictures of us, really camping it up I happened to look up at one point and there was someone with a camera poised and ready, so I slid my arm around Colleen's shoulder and she snuggled in close and we did our best "Oh, aren't they cute" pose. Flash! I go back to working on my sketch and then I hear Colleen say in her best "uh-oh" voice, "Oh. Hi Maggie." It's Maggie Thompson from the *Comics Buyer's Guide*. Colleen and I both turn several shades of red, everyone's laughing. I made several attempts to grab the camera ("Gimme the film, Maggie, I'm not kidding") I think people should be forced to wear press ID at these things

We still had quite a line-up of people at the end of the Exhibit hours, so I just arranged for Diamond to announce that we would finish the last batch up in my suite. John Christian (saviour of artists everywhere) met us there with lunch and we managed to finish before the first few retailer arrivals. And then it was time to pack and head for home to finish a few pages before Albany.

Had I been at the Gem Awards (apologies to everyone for my absence), I don't think I could have done better than Mick Jagger's acceptance speech when the Stones were inducted into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame (I think the quote is from H.L. Mencken).

"Americans are very funny people. First you shock them and then they put you in a museum."

Thank you and good night.

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dear Dave and Gerhard,

I've just finished reading *High Society* so I thought I'd write to tell you how much I enjoyed it. I loved that Moon Roach character. I was laughing my head off whenever he appeared, especially when he dropped that crescent on Holland M. Hadden. When I was 7 or 8 years old, Moon Knight was the first comic book that I got into, so to see such a witty parody pleased me especially.

The part at the end of the book where Cerebus cries and embraces the Elf was really effective. It was the first time that I had ever felt a genuine wave of sympathy (or even empathy) for a comic book character.

Now that I've read *High Society* I now understand a little more about the plot and the character. For instance, up until now I didn't quite realise who exactly Astoria was.

I started reading *Cerebus* from issue 104 (the one with Flaming Carrot in it) and stopped a few issues into *Jaka's Story* mainly because I was still in school and didn't have money for anything (apart from records and tapes). During that time, though, I managed to buy issues 91–103 and now I've started reading again (re-commencing with issue 153). I've been busy buying up all the back issues that I have missed while being away.

I'm eighteen now and not in education anymore, but I'm still spending too much money on music, although it's C.D.s now instead of records and tapes. My job is not a well paying job unfortunately, but I'll try to get around to sending you a cheque for a years subscription quite soon.

In a final note, is there any chance of you doing a *Cerebus* U.K. Tour?

Yours,

Chris Campbell
2 Walton House
131 Merton Road
Wordsworth SW185EJ
London, England

Once again, a UK Tour is pretty unlikely at this point. There is just going to be too much to do as follow-up to the US Tour, including Operation Moondog and putting everything in place to assist the stores in promoting *Cerebus* and other self-published books. Hope you continue to enjoy the book!

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

What's up? Hope the tour is going well. Although I won't be able to get out and see you since you won't be anywhere that I will be (seeing as *I* will be *nowhere*).

Did you get a chance to read my 24-hour comic? . . . The Shitboy Story? Hopefully, it was worth a few minutes of entertainment to you.

WOW! You're answering letters in the column again. 'Course I wasn't around when you were answering before, but I'm still all tingly.

Anyway, I do have a point why I'm writing. Now I know that you are all into Oscar Wilde, so when I heard what I heard I thought of you.

I was listening to the radio at work this morning. One of those "witty" morning teams was on. They were going through the "things that happened on this day." Well, they mentioned that "on this day" however many years ago, Oscar Wilde was sentenced to two years hard labor for homosexual activities. I'm thinking, "WOW! Who'da thought that this radio station would mention Oscar Wilde?" Then the radio guys said, "Who the hell is Oscar Wilde?" and went on to make some jokes about it all.

I wasn't offended or anything, but Jesus Christ, those fuckers sure made themselves sound ignorant!

Although I, myself, must be careful of what I say, seeing as I never did go out and read any of the Oscar Wilde books recommended in the letter columnas, I promised myself I would. But I know I'm not alone. I'm willing to bet that there are numerous readers out there who promised themselves the exact same thing and didn't follow through with it. Don't let them deny it. We all know they are out there.

So like I said, I should be careful. At least I know I'm ignorant and I'm not going to compound the problem by saying some stupid shit.

Maybe I'll renew my promise to myself . . . yeah, right.

Gettin' off my chest as usual,

Later

Jeff Dobson
615 Mueller Rd.
Hartford, WI
USA 53027

I'll bet the disc jockies in question know all the words to the *Gilligan's Island* theme, though.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

What a swine I am. You go along giving creative folk a good name, by answering all of these fan-boy letters, and I can't even write back to you for a year or so. Truth to tell, I haven't been reading many comics in the last six months. Not because I've gone off the medium, just that other things have been taking up so much time. Other things? I didn't realise that doing a job you enjoyed could be so time consuming. As well, I've been trying to write as much as I read. Some small success, local competitions, small press and such like.

Something you asked in your letter was what legal pretext could be used for "shutting *Cerebus* down". I'm no expert on Canadian jurisprudence, which seems to combine its roots in the French Civil code with corrupting doses of English style common-law (a similar situation to Scots law, where the basic principles of the institutional writers are being watered down by British statues). From my modest acquaintance with our own criminal law, the equivalent Scottish charge would probably be "Conspiracy to corrupt the lieges". Not too different from

the charges levelled at dear, dead Oscar. I though you might like that.

I'm really enjoying *Mothers and Daughters*. Compared to the stately progress (funeral pace?) of *Melmoth*, you fairly rattled through the first few issues. And now I find myself in another mind game, and the intellectual stakes have been raised again. You've kept us locked outside Cerebus' head for so long that the "Joy" section in this issues was genuinely moving. You're certainly rattling my favourite chains — Wilde, religion and now chess. Next thing you'll be getting Cerebus into meaningful relationships with women he doesn't want to sleep with and having him explore the wonderful world of malt whisky. Did you really have this plot in mind when you finished off *High Society*? I am impressed.

I'm disappointed that your current tour isn't extending to this side of the pond, but at least there has been one pleasant spin-off. The re-issued t-shirts and pins were ordered in bulk by *Future Shock* in Glasgow, and at least some of the Earth Piggies here managed to get their claws on some. I managed to fulfil a half-lifetime ambition and bought "He doesn't love you . . .". It gives me something to wear when my "UK Tour 86" T is in the wash. Neil Craig and Jim Campbell, who own the shop, have done a great job importing the merchandise, far outstripping Glasgow's *Forbidden Planet* franchise. As far as I know, forty t-shirts were sold in about 72 hours, and more are on back-order. If any of the cash gets back to you, you owe them some thanks. They're definitely two of the good guys.

Recommendations for the reading list? Try *Rats and Gargoyles* by Mary Gentle. She writes close grained fantasy set in a society in which *Cerebus*, and *Cerebus* fans, would feel at home.

Get your moss-free Canadian ass over here real soon, OK?

Yours randomly,

Michael Mooney
26 Underwood Street
Shawlands
Glasgow
G41 3EP

P.S. I promised to say hello to Gerry, Susan & Mikey down in Newcastle. How do you like the First Half T-shirt, stranger?

Always nice to hear from someone in my dad's birthplace. In answer to your question, I've had the basic story-line for *Mothers & Daughters* in mind since July of 1979. Very weird experience watching myself writing and drawing pages I've been thinking about for almost thirteen years.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

Besides collecting comics I like to work T.V. crossword puzzles. So, I'm probably the only *Cerebus* fan who will see this.

I thought you would be interested in knowing that you've made the 'BIG TIME' (HA-HA).

I don't ever recall another independent creator as a clue in a T.V. crossword.

Don't you think you should pick up the pace a little? After all, you only have another 140 issues to finish the story.

Thanks,

Ron Massengill
1637 W. Gregory
Chicago, IL
USA 60640

And there I am. Number 26 down; three letter word for "*Cerebus* creator". Having been a seven letter word in most people's minds for the last few years it makes a nice change of pace.

★★★★★★★★★★

From Chicagoland's TV Crosswords Super Special, June 1992.

Dear Dave,

Okay, this is the serious one. I guess the research didn't take as long as I expected.

The reason I'm writing this is to clarify, primarily to myself, what I've learnt from some of the stories that have been going on in Aardvark Comment. First we had the 'lonely hearts' stories, then the 'rape' hysteria, and now that that's all died down I want to put in my two pennies' worth. I've got several points to make, and a couple of stories of my own with which to illustrate them.

Okay?

Point One: *If you admire someone from a distance, for goodness' sake go and introduce yourself! I know it's nice to fantasize about what you think they're like, but honestly, it's best to shed your illusions as quickly as possible. Whatever you do, though, don't run away from the person or the emotions they've stirred up. You might not get a lover, but you might very easily make a great friend.*

When I first arrived at college, I met a woman, two years older than me but only a year up academically. She was stunningly beautiful and I wasn't so I spent three months avoiding her. Then, at the Christmas Ball, I saw here sitting under the stairs on her own, resting, and I didn't have anything better to do, so I sat down next to her and introduced myself. We got on like a house on fire and she invited me to a social event organized by the people on her course. Which brings me to

Point Two: *It's a funny thing, but often the best people to get involved with are those who seem to be your exact opposite. It keeps things lively, y'know?*

So, I made friends with her. Trouble was, she was just so damned gorgeous, and I only got to see her every now and then. We weren't on the same course or anything, she lived out and I lived in, she spent her evenings out while I got drunk at the college bar every night or whenever funds permitted. But whenever she was around, she always made her presence felt, which action made me extremely uncomfortable, considering how I was beginning to feel about her.

Point Three: *Mixed Signals. If you spend time with a member of the opposite and you're getting keen on them but you're not sure what they think about it, why not ask them? Clears things up quick and keeps you from spending the rest of your life wondering, doesn't it?*

It took me five months to work up the courage. It was the beginning of May, and it was the Rags ball. She breezed in round about midnight, with a few of her friends, and I was just about drunk enough to so say hello. Now it's a few minutes later and we're standing around the bicycle racks outside.

"Something on your mind, Mike?" she says.

"Yeah," says I. "You are." Not a brilliant thing to say but the bravest thing I ever did, swear to God.

"Doing what?" she says.

Devastating.

Point Four: *A funny thing with women is, probably due to the pressures put on us from all areas regarding sex, many of them seem to think that any approach by a man is going to be made on a trajectory leading to her bedroom, when in fact you could be sincere in wanting to just get to know her, have her as a friend. I tend to find that attitude insulting and unintelligent. It's not necessarily their fault — outside forces, as I mentioned — but it can kill a friendship stone dead.*

Of course, I *did* have her bedroom in mind, but as it happened, she didn't seem to be particularly bothered. I ended up sitting on her living-room carpet talking with her until four in the morning, with all her friends looking on disapprovingly from the couches.

Anyway, I screwed things up a while later. She arranged a date with me (just drinks in the college bar) and I lost my nerve and blew it. That's the *stupidest* thing I ever did. But I was still her friend and I helped her as well as I could (read: 'I was practically useless') while she went through exam trauma, got so worked up about revising for her second-year exams that she couldn't actually take them, had some sort of nervous breakdown and left college. So much for that. It does bring up another point though. Just add this to the end of Point One.

Point One (a): *Getting to know the object of your passion is especially important if there's a time limit after which s/he will go away. Let them know you like 'em before they're gone.*

Right, that's one story down. Now I've got a few loose cannons to set off before the next biggie:

Point Five: *Sometimes the other person won't realize what s/he does to you, or something happens in their life, or you spend time away from each other and s/he cools off on you, or whatever, and you end up hearing words that equal "can't it just be casual?" Generally speaking, these people are no fucking good.*

Point Six: *If, say, a woman tells you she doesn't want a serious relationship and then a friend of yours starts leaning towards her emotionally, you can probably infer that they're getting together but they don't want to alienate you, hurt your feelings. Which tends to hurt more than anything. Clear out quick.*

Point Seven: *Some women find it impossible to say the word 'no' when that is clearly what they mean. If it looks like 'no' and sounds like 'no' then that's probably what it is.*

These three are general points I just wanted to mention because they crop up in the letters and in life so often. I know it's a stylistic error, putting them here, but I wanted to get them out of the way before going on to the next biggie:

Point Eight: *Rape is not the normal male setting. FACT.*

How do I know? I've never been raped and I sure as hell haven't raped anyone.

I have been in a position to do so, however.

Picture the scene. It's eighteen months since the previous story. Friday night. I've just spent the evening at the pictures with a friend of mine from my course and a group of young first-year girls, and now I'm at the Friday night disco at college, and five minutes after I get there a girl I've never met before swings a wine bottle into my groin.

Exactly twenty-four hours later I'm in bed with her (my bed), and she's got me all fired up. Bit different from the last story, eh? Let's just say I learnt a few things in the meantime, cleaned up my act and so forth, learnt how to get on with women. I mean after facing up to the lady I've just told you about (and she was a lady) I could face anybody.

So there we are, butt naked and lying in bed, she's been unable to keep her hands away from my euphemism since she got into my room, and suddenly she says:

"Let's not."

Can you believe that?

I spent the night rigid with sexual tension. Couldn't sleep a wink. And when she woke up the next morning, she still failed to oblige.

Now, after all that build-up, I could have turned around and told her she'd come to my room, dropped her pants, got into my bed and engaged in practises which indicated rabid wanton desire so she was damn will going to spread 'em, right? I mean I was cross-eyed with lust by then!

I let her go. I was bloody enraged by the whole incident, but I let her get up and get dressed. I didn't even consider the possibility of doing it to her no matter what she said. I mean that'd be **rape,** right?

Rape is not the normal male setting.

Skip to a couple of months later. Yet another different woman. I should mention it was someone I'd know as a friend for a while and who had indicated she fancied me on occasion. This time, we're walking back to Halls after an evening at the bar (guess where I spent most of my time as a student?) and she starts fooling around, trying to provoke me. You know, childish stuff, like flicking her drink in my eyes. So I thought what the hell and chased her around a bit, like I thought she wanted, until she found someone to go "save me, save me" to. I left her with him, figuring that was the end of that.

Couple of weeks later I find out that she's been telling her friends I was going to rape her that night. Which brigs me to . . .

Point Eight (a): *Rape is something that unscrupulous women can use to threaten and discredit men. FACT.*

Point Nine: *Women can be bastards too.* But most of them aren't.

Actually, I think this letter turned out to be pretty badly put-together. It says most of the things I wanted to say, though, so I can't see any point in changing it. I wanted some of the people out there to know that what they write is relevant, it makes some of us think.

That, as it's been said before, is where ideas begin.

Sincerely,

Mike Sivier
9 Greenacre Road
Whitchurch BRISTOL
BS14 OHL
England

P.S. Maybe next time I'll have a bash at criticising the storyline. Be a bit of a novelty, eh?

You didn't ask for my opinions, so here they are: Point one: Know what you want. If you want to go to bed with them, bring it up early in the conversation then switch subjects and let them think about it for a while. Point two: A woman is always going to be your exact opposite. It's the way they're built. Point three: Always bring this up in the first conversation. If you don't ask for a yes or no in the first forty-eight hours, you are permanently assigned to their fan club. If they like you, they'll give you what you want, but you have to ask for it and then make a move of some kind. (When she asked "Doing what?" You should have said, "Having multiple orgasms until you tell me to stop"). Point four: If you want to go to bed with them and you pretend you just want to be a friend, you aren't fooling them for a minute. Point five: They know exactly what they're doing to you; but you can't switch sailboats after the forty-eight hour mark. Once a fan club member, always a fan club member. Point six: If you want to go to bed with her and she doesn't want to, clear out quick because someone else is going to, sooner rather than later. Point seven: Anything that isn't a yes is a no. Clear out quick. Point eight: If this happens, tell them to go immediately or you will call a cop and have them removed forcibly. Point eight: Welcome to the Feminist Age. Point nine: True and don't kid yourself.

★★★★★★★★★★

Hi Dave and Gerhard!

I enjoyed *Cerebus* 156, but, as is often the case I didn't understand some of the significance of the mind games. I'll have to read it over a few more times before I can even sort out what I think I understand and what I decide I don't understand. Even then, I could have everything reversed — that is, I could really be understanding those scenes I decide I don't understand and not have a clue on the scenes I think I understand — UNDERSTAND? Gee, this is almost as much fun as trying to make sense of *Cerebus!*

I had decided that just writing that above paragraph wasn't worth a letter, but decided to share a recent visit to a new comic store with you. A new comic store just recently opened in downtown Portland, Oregon near a large book store (Powell's) that I go to often I decided to check out the store and did, but with results that will ensure that I never visit it again.

First, I noticed a box of the 1970's Marvel Treasuries that reprinted some of their stories in a large, oversize format. I asked the owner how much they were and he replied, "They're not for sale. Not unless someone offers me a fantastic sum for them." I replied that while I liked the large size, the series was not collectable as far as being worth much in resale value. He replied, "That's why they're not for sale." I was about to ask why he had them in his store if they were not for sale, when I was distracted by seeing a *Free Cerebus* on a nearby rack.

The following is why I will never enter this store again. The *Free Cerebus* was on a "bargain" comic rack with the price tag of $1. I was happy to see the comic since I had been curious what it looked like and I hadn't seen it yet anywhere else. I had read in *Cerebus* that you had printed these to help new readers decide to start reading *Cerebus.* I understood that these were sent through the distributor with the understanding that they were to be free to comics customers, thus the title *Free Cerebus.* When I mentioned this to the owner, he said "I don't know anything about that. I got it through the distributor and if you want to buy it, it's a dollar." I tried to talk to him about how great a job I felt you two were doing with *Cerebus,* but he seemed uninterested. I went ahead and bought the comic, because I was interested in how you would present "what has happened so far" in order to interest new readers. But I resolved to never step in his door again. From my experience with what is needed to make a comics shop successful, hopefully his store will not be open for long — I feel that would be true justice.

I almost didn't share the above story with you, because I don't write you to depress you. But hopefully, most store owners did use *Free Cerebus* in the manner that you wanted. By the way, I feel you did a great job of trying to cover the first 150 issues in only 32 pages.

Till next time . . .

Peace, Live Long and Prosper.

Jerry Edwards
P.O. Box 1703
Vancouver, WA
USA 98668-1703

Actually there are stores in Chicago selling *Free Cerebus* for six dollars each. Far from depressing me, this means we are still alive in the collector / investor side of the market which makes up ninety per cent of the comic book stores. The collector/investor stores have no interest in content; only in the dollar value. You should limit yourself to stores that sell comic books as reading material if that's what you want them for, but please remember that a lion's share of our revenue on the monthly book is from stores like the one you describe.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Stay tuned for a few Notes from Apocalypse.

It's too bad you weren't in Los Angeles *this* weekend, Dave. You could have had a firsthand look at the kind of violent upheaval you seem interested in and occasionally portray in the pages of *Cerebus*. I mean, since I survived Thursday night, I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Thursday afternoon, some of my neighbors and I gathered on the roof to watch the columns of smoke rising from the fires in nearby Hollywood. There were three big ones, discolouring the sky and fouling the air, transforming Los Angeles into a big smoking section. (The sunset that night was very pretty, what you could see of it.) Another fire broke out, much closer than the others, and we anxiously watched it for an hour before it burnt itself out. The authorities were far too busy to investigate that one. (Today, coming back from a little excursion down Hollywood Boulevard (which was crowded with weekend people and not nearly as bad as I'd thought it might be) I found the source of that little fire: someone had torched a car about a hundred yards from my building.) I had several beers and one guy started passing a pipe around. I got more stoned than I've been in ages.

Wouldn't you?

After dark, a few looters skulked up from Hollywood. We saw a few other people about, trying to beat the curfew or blatantly defying it. One guy shouted up at us, asking if the curfew was in effect yet. Another guy was questing for cigarettes. Numerous Wes-tec Security vehicles appeared and re-appeared.

There is a Scientology building just down the street and we amused ourselves by watching them play ninjas as they patrolled the grounds in their Chuck Norris bodysuits. Like a bunch of soldier ants.

We heard gunshots numerous times. Not just one or two shots, volleys, regular gunplay. And they echo in the canyons of the city, bouncing off buildings until their proximity or direction is difficult to determine. We listened to several of these volleys before it occured to us that maybe we should take cover.

I was up until dawn. Just watching and listening. I managed to read a few issues of *Blackhawk*.

One of my friends, who lives very close to the Wilshire area where several of the fires were, called and said, "It's the Apocalypse."

I wish I could feel more sure that he was only half-serious.

That's it for now, Dave. It's getting dark. Things seem to have calmed down but I think it's time to run up to the roof for a status report, just to be safe.

Later,

Tony Seybert
5987 Franklin Ave., Apt. #203
Los Angeles, CA
USA 90028

P.S. The Hollywood comic shop I frequent, Mo' Comics, was left untouched and I got my weekly comics there today. Hi, Andy! Hi, Monica! One of the books I picked up was *Cerebus* #157. I haven't been able to concentrate enough to read the whole thing yet, but what I did read looks great. Keep up the good work.

P.P.S. Hi, Gerhard. It was nice meeting you at that L.A. Convention. You keep up the good work, too.

For further developments, we take you now to Larry Young on Price Street. Larry?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I wasn't going to do this, but . . .

Boston was a fun town, and some of my best friends are there, but I made the move to Los Angeles. "Go west, young man," and all that. The second day I was there, we get a 6.2 on the ol' Richter, and suddenly I'm a west coast veteran. I'm eating dried tomato and watercress sandwiches, I'm saying "dude" every five seconds and I'm even cultivating a glassy-eyed stare.

Then, my childhood friend Rick Austin (MTV Sports – L.A.) comes home waving Lakers tickets for game three at the Forum. Well, you're a man of the world, Dave; you know what happened.

Two white boys stop for gas after the game: three men and one woman of color decide to explain to us their dissatisfaction with the American Legal System in general and of the Rodney King verdict in particular. Rick has his wallet stolen; I retain my wallet, but have my nose broken.

Nobody asks our views.

Nobody asks to be born black or white or to be mugged or to be raped or to be shot.

Sometimes it's just that kind of world.

Me?

I'm just going to try to leave the place a little brighter than I found it.

Later, Dave.

Larry Young
4319 Price St., #2
Los Angeles, CA
USA 90027

P.S. Let's all try to be especially nice to Rob Lavender now that both Nicole and I are on the west coast. Hey, Robbie, give a great big smile and wave to Linda at the Pour House on Sunday!

We've just received a special bulletin from Officer William C. Stennis on the front lines and we take you there now. Officer Stennis?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave;

Don't confuse me with the facts, my mind is made up! This is the attitude I have been bombarded with for the past year, escalating daily until it reached a fever pitch on May 29, and the city I grew up in went boom! I have never heard such illogical, unreasoned, raving, raging bullshit in all the time I've walked this planet. Jeez! People wake up and smell the metaphor here! Reality check please!

If a position is wrong, turning up the volume on it, screaming it, getting thousands more to scream it, getting public officials and community leaders to scream it,

publishing it in the newspapers and getting on the network news . . . none of this alters the fact that it is wrong. This world is chocked full of bi-peds who are willing to accept a popular opinion without careful scrutiny.

The S-E-Y-B-E-R-T letter in issue #147 sent me ballistic. It was the final straw. It seemed fairly banal up until he mentioned Rodney King and, "l.a.p.d.", (sic) or rather (sick). I've had it with cheap shots. All the cheap shots. Not just aimed at LAPD, but those aimed at any group that the cheap shooter doesn't know squat about. The cheap shots usually come when the shooter's knowledge and intellect fail on any particular argument. Can't think of what to say? Take a cheap shot.

Listen. What qualifies me? Why should my opinion be heard and considered? Opinions are like ass-holes; everybody's got one. Well I'll tell you. I've spent 10 years in law enforcement, the last 2+ with LAPD. Yep, I'm out there doing it, not watching it on the tee-vee or catching it at the movies. I'm not letting some news reader tell me about it. I drive to the station, walk up to the locker room, suit up, body armor, utility belt, guns and all, get my car, radio, shotgun and roll out, a new centurion. Part of the thin blue line. (America has just gotten a taste of exactly how thin it is, ie; the la riot). I was born an American of color (yep, I refuse to use *this* year's race title du jour). I know where I was during the riot, where were you?

Dave, I just finished working back to back, 8 in a row, 12 hour shifts under the worst conditions you can imagine. Actually, you could imagine it Dave, we've all been privy to your incredible imaging. For the rest who've never experienced chaos, violent anarchy up close and personal, check-it-out; here was *my* view of the riot.

The movie "Apocalypse Now" in thxdolbystereosensuround. Or if Francis Ford Coppola had designed the pirates of the Caribbean ride at Disneyland. In slow motion we drove through the street at night, caravans of 3 cars, 3–4 officers to a car, red lights strobing the devastation, sirens screaming, helmets with face shields making everything sound hollow. The radio regurgitating one 'officer' or 'fireman needs help' call after another, the RTO's voices cracked and stressed. On the right a row of stores with towering guts of bright yellow plumes, with choking, burning plastic smoke. Back-lit looters pushing their new trophies down the sidewalk in a parade of 90's Americana, carefree like roaches across a dark kitchen floor. Whenever we focus the light of our attention, they scurry and scatter momentarily. Too many roaches, not enough time, get to the next emergency call, they're a dime a dozen and I'm looking for the sick-o supplying the dimes. On the right a row of already raped and burnt out stores lay prone. The twisted, charred bent out security gates like a mouth full of bloody bashed teeth, a giant scorched skull left on the sidewalk by the looters to remind us how powerless we are. Small fires smolder for days, bleeding a smell I will spend a lifetime trying to forget. Rubble and debris everywhere.

We turn a corner and are confronted with some citizen's home made barricade, the graffiti-like, spray painted letters scrawled, "We love and will protect our neighborhood, road closed". A small shopping center, parking area in front of the stores ringed by dumpsters, clothing racks and wooden pallets, like covered wagons in a B-Western. Korean shop owners, their families and their friends huddled in the center, stationed on the roof, armed to the teeth. We leave them alone because hell, we can't help them any better than they are helping themselves. Their stores are still intact. It's the land of do-as-you-please.

We stop in front of a gun store. Glass broken, but bars steadfast, thank God. The last thing we need is more guns out here. 2 doors down at a pillaged mini-mall, a small, strange group of people have strung an old fire hose from the apartment building across the street and are moving through the dangerous and still burning wreckage of a 7–11 for what reason we cannot fathom. There's nothing left and these are not the owners. We tell them there is a curfew and to get off the streets. They argue. We don't have the time, energy or the patience to be polite or persuasive. This is not a kinder, gentler Los Angeles. We give them 5 minutes to get off the streets. So much for PR.

We all turn as one as another surreal image passes by. A blue unmarked van full of men wearing black flack jackets, black jump-suits, black military helmets and black hockey style masks, some poking out of a sun-roof in the top, others hanging out of the windows, the scariest looking machine guns I've ever seen pointed in every direction, followed by 3 unmarked cars full of the same figures and then rumbling along in the rear is the midnight blue LAPD tank, sans battering ram. "Who the fuck was that", someone asks. "Swat I guess", someone answers, "Who-ever kicked their ant hill over is in a world of hurt". In the back of my head I can hear "The Doors" singing, "This is the end . . . ".

Whew! I didn't mean for that that to go on so long, but I kinda got caught up. I haven't talked about a lot of this stuff since it happened. Not all together. Now the incident which is being toted as the cause of it all. The infamous 'Rodney King' beating.

Did you watch the trial? No, not just the 20 second excerpts on the evening news, but the whole trial? Well I did. What I couldn't watch due to work, I taped. Let's get some accepted facts straight.

The Rodney King arrest video has been branded as an example of police abuse and brutality. We were compared to the infamous la street gangs by the ACLU and members of the "community" have labeled Rodney King the poster boy for racism in L.A. Pa-leese. Has everyone been taking gas or what? Has everyone decided to substitute Americas scariest home videos for our judicial system? Have we all forgotten how deceptive and manipulative images on the tee-vee screen can be? Has everyone here forgotten how the Bush Administration used Willie Horton to achieve it's success in that election and how well it worked? Face it people, we are a country that has been conditioned for decades by the advertising industry and other mega-buck entertainment industries to believe and accept what we see coming out of the tube with a minimum of intellectual process and a maximum of emotional reaction. The system is designed to resist such manipulations and contrary to popular belief, often succeeds. That's why we have trials and not just bring the defendants onto game shows.

If I show you a video tape of a couple in the woods having sex. The man is a black male with his blue jeans and jockey shorts down around his knees, on top of a white female whose dress is pulled up around her waist and down to her

stomach. Her frilly lace panties are torn and lying on the ground beside her head. She has one shoe on and the other is also visable on the ground beside her. He is wearing a t-shirt. As he thrusts into her, her hands alternately thrash around the dirt and dry leaves and clutch at his arms on either side of her head. Her legs are up on his shoulders. It is clear from the camera distance and objects between the lens and the couple that they probably don't know they are being video taped. There is no sound. The tape lasts 90 seconds. It starts with the couple in this position and ends as the man seems to begin to ejaculate. Is this rape?

The correct answer is there isn't enough information to judge. The video tape only goes towards proving that the couple did have sex. Was the sex rape? Was there a crime commited? *Not enough evidence!* To be rape you need to at *least* prove that the sex was non-consentual which you cannot get just from the video tape. Even if the male was charged with rape and all of the public officials and news readers and community leaders scream, "guilty, guilty, guilty," just as they have done for a year in the Rodney King case, there must still be a trial and the presumption of innocence until a judge and/or jury has heard *all* of the evidence.

Was the force used against Rodney King criminal? You cannot determine that just from the video tape because we law enforcement officers are *commanded* by law and policy to use force in certain circumstances, and to answer the question you must consider why the force was used, what was the perceived threat to the officers and what is the policy of the department. None of which is on the video tape.

Perceptions. Consider the perceptions of the people of Iest of most Holy's actions and words. consider how they differ with our, the readers, perceptions since we have more information, a different perspective, and different experiences. Recall how during *High Society* and *Church and State* the different characters all had differing views and reactions to the same events, (remember the deal with the goat and the conventions). Do you really want trial by popular opinion when popular opinion is and can be manipulated by people in the public eye for their own personal agendas? Should judges and juries now stop and conduct an opinion poll before rendering a verdict? *You cannot have a criminal justice system that is autonomous except when you don't like it!*

Was the use of force criminally excessive? *The prosecution did not prove this beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.*

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to a quote from Clive Barker's hellraiser, sex, lies and holywar; echoes, dreams and revelations by Nicholas Vince; "You know why people believe in predictions and dreams? Because certain doom is less terrifying than uncertainty. It is the truly brave who rely on their own wits to deal with an uncertain world, who know themselves enough to decide what is right . . . who can admit the world is chaotic, and build knowing their work will be destroyed, but build anyway. Who install order in the world without being obsessed by order; who leave room for the surprise; who stand in crazy balance. The others want their future cellophane-wrapped, bland, and full of artificial blame. They turn to politics, religion and racism to choose the scapegoat. People do like to have someone to blame."

My job as a police officer is to rely on my wits, go out into the chaos, knowing my work will be destroyed, try to install order and stand in crazy balance. Oh yes, people do like to have someone to blame. Currently they are saying that LAPD was not aggressive enough in responding to the riot. After a year of being beat over the head with Rodney King by the media and the politicians, and being asked by those politicians not to over react after the verdict came down, . . . I wonder why. The people will get the police service they ask for. They better be damned careful what they ask for . . . they will get it and have to live with the consequences.

In conclusion, while the media and politicians and political wannabee's keep the public's attention diverted with these dog and pony shows that in the long term impact society like a dust mote impacts a bus, real issues; education, economy, teen pregnancy, issues that are not easily or quickly dealt with, get short shrift and real police reform; more officers, better training and better equipment is ignored. Whatever happens to Daryl Gates, Rodney King or the 4 officers is short term and doesn't mean bat guano in the terms of serious social improvement.

Standing on the thin blue line,

William C. Stennis

P.S. Due to the daily death threats we get, please omit my address, it could mean my life.

P.P.S. Seeing the mention in Note From The President in issue #157 got me "flippin' like a flag on a pole". Thanks, it's great to know you noticed and remembered.

P.P.P.S. My *Cerebus* phone books are in the top 5 things to grab if the house catches on fire. Your work remains the most literate, most consistantly entertaining, and in an arena that has a dearth of social satire or even good parody your beacon burns bright. It's the best 'reads' I own. I'm with you to 300.

P.P.P.P.S. I'll write light and funnier next time, I promise. If you print this, cool, if not, just glad you read it.

C-Ya.

Thank you, Officer Stennis. And now, on the lighter side . . .

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Why can't I think of anything to write? Wait, let me clear my head and think this through. Yes . . . that's it! I've got it now! The connection! I . . . understand it all now. Everything. The first hundred and fifty issues, and the next hundred and fifty . . . as clear as if they were laid out before me! And it's all so simple! Dave, you genius. But the one thing I don't understand is why I never pieced it together before. Only after reading the phone book volumes, all in one sitting, without any pause or respite . . . wait, now I'm beginning to understand. The letters pages! Hidden in them, so subtly, but now so utterly clear, subliminal messages preventing *Cerebus* readers from putting the story together. Muddling our minds, confusing us with bizarre tales (I see now that every letter was your own handiwork), and those pictures of Connie (you in drag, why couldn't I see!). Over the years you became so adept at it that a mere glance at the letters page was enough to make a reader lose track of the plot, forget what he was thinking, but still somehow make him buy the next issue. It was a good game, Dave, and well

played, but I have you now. I'm going to send in this letter telling everyone the secret you've tried to hide for so long, the secret about *Cerebus* that is so shocking, so utterly incredible . . . wait, let me get the address to write to . . . a quick look at the letters page . . . there! Now I . . . I . . . Why can't I think of anything to write? Wait, let me clear my head . . .

Vaguely,

Scott Chesworth
581 E. 9th St. #22
Davis, CA
USA 95616

You're getting sleepy . . . sleeeepy. Your eyelids are heavy . . . heavvvy . . .

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Artistic Geniuses (Genii?) to the North,

Earlier today (April 11, 1992 [anno Domini]) I received a black box in the mail. On it is a mailing label, return address, bulk rate postage stamp, and a message in blue letters. The message reads: A gift for you on your 18th birthday from Gillette The Best a Man Can Get. Inside was a "Gillette Sensor Shaving System" (a razor and a couple of replacement cartridges for it), a propagandistic letter and a propagandistic ad sheet. The letter associates the aforementioned shaving system with sex and cars and includes a dollar-off coupon for replacement cartridges. The ad sheet associates the system with sex, sports, technology and style in general. It also pushes Gillette Foamy shaving cream.

My normal electric razor having burned out a few days ago (and me being too lazy to go to the store for a new razor of any kind) I thought "Alright! A practical present from no one I've ever met." Of course normal cynicism kicked in and I then thought "Those cartridges are going to be real expensive." But hey, I can get some use out of it anyway, and if I think it's worth it I can buy replacements and if I don't think it's worth it I won't buy replacements. So there's nothing wrong with getting a slightly early birthday present from a corporation, right?

Then it hit me. Birthday present. The gift giving division of Gillette knew my birthday. And my name and address, of course. Which gave rise to the question how do they know these things.

And I thought about it. I've never sent in one of those consumer surveys and I've never sent in a warranty card. Any mail order questions about age have only asked for age in years, and since Gillette knew when my birthday was down to at least the month, that wasn't the answer. Credit cards? A possibility, but it would seem they were searching for eighteen year old guys, so they would probably have gotten my name through something more specific to youth. Selective Service? I hope not, otherwise my government is giving rather personal information out to people who have no need to have it. The people from the SAT or ACT? I would hope the people who have had such a large amount of importance in determining my academic future would keep my information to themselves (ego-sideline: I did very well on both tests). My high school? No, they're far too anal retentive. Colleges I've applied to? I would hope not for the same reasons as for the ACT and SAT.

And so, everything I've thought of that is a possible way for Gillette to have gotten my birthday is unacceptable. And so I am faced with a nightmare, that some institution I have trusted has sold information about me to the Gillette North Atlantic Group.

In order for me to circumvent this nightmare in the future, it would be helpful if you would print the following information about me. Born April 19, 1974. Brown hair. Brown eyes. 5'11"–6' (tall, that is). 155–160 pounds. Thirteen shoe size. Will be attending Grosse Pointe South High School until June 19, 1992. Will be attending the University of Michigan. Near future travel plans include Europe. Likes: chicks (yeah, it's un '90's, but I gotta be me) who are at least moderately intelligent and moderately attractive, comic books by A-V and NEC, debate, arguments, calendars, Maupassant, stage shows involving Mike Patton, Twin Peaks and myself. Dislikes: Cirinists, people who refuse to accept the bizarre, when people smoke around me, the class of '95, Anton Chekov, C. L. growing flaccid (according to the photo in 151), bands who delay stage shows involving Mike Patton, America's Funniest Home Videos and those who refuse to either like or loathe me.

There now. Any time I get mail that contains information about me that is fairly personal, I can assume that it was taken from this letter or that the letter implied it. Ah! Peace of mind at last!

Ted Watts
530 Cadieux,
Grosse Pointe, MI
USA 48230

P.S. Sorry Connie, but even lying down that second chin is still flopping around your face. You've probably been eating too much.

P.P.S. I second Margaret R. Tucker's idea from 156 about a posterbook of *Cerebus* covers. Opposed? Good. Motion carried.

Actually that was just a particularly bad photo of Connie; having sat next to her at the Pittsburgh stop, I can tell you that she is the same drop-dead heart-breaking beauty at twenty that she was when she was thirteen.

And my guess would be the Selective Service sold their mailing list to help pay for the on-board ashtrays on the Stealth bombers; only eight million dollars more to go.

★★★★★★★★★★

Hey Dave,

How's things? They seem to be going pretty well. Glad to read about the Tour going so well. How did the Boston stop stack up to the rest? I only ask because it seemed to go so swimmingly at the time. I'm counting the days (okay, years) until your return visit with Gerhard in tow.

I'm pretty sure that the next issue (#158) will give us the grand unveiling of Suenteus Po as Aardvark #3; however I know better than to try and predict where the book is going so I'm also pretty sure that the next issue will give us the grand unveiling of ME as Aardvark #3. If the former is true then *Mothers & Daughters* is starting, in true Sim fashion, with a meeting between a father and son.

I almost hate to bring this up but . . . is it possible that I liked the letters column more when you were absent? Oh no . . .

Time to plug a store. If any of you find yourselves in the western part of the state looking for a good shop, try *Lance's Comics* on Main Street in Northampton. Lance puts the independents (among them the Canadian Gang: Sim, Upton, Brown, etc.) at the front of the store and is always eager to point a customer toward a *Drawn & Quarterly* and away from that third

copy of *X-crement* #17. He's got a shockingly small stock of good DC back issues but he's got fine taste in music so we like him anyway. The McComic Shop in the nearby Hampshire Mall pales in comparison. As you may recall Northampton first gained notoriety as site of the legendary Creator's Rights Summit some years back. The town's just dripping with good comic vibes!

That's about it this time around. Until Cerebus turns in his sword for a sitar, Make Mine, uh, Melmoth.

Best,

Michael Dobosz
29 Grove Street
Turners Falls, MA
USA 01376

Thank you, Michael. I was just waiting for someone to say that they liked the letters page better without the answers. It's just the excuse I needed. So, ladies and gentlemen; this will be the last issue in which I answer the letters. Thank you very much and Good Night! (Just kidding; PSYCHE!)

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I really enjoyed issue #157's last page, as well as the two page lay out on the 1992 Tour. In particular, I found the Gary Susman article to be good reading — *so,* why don't you piece together an edited collection of articles on *Cerebus,* combined with selected "Notes From The President", some letters from the readers, and some other Aardvark paraphernalia. Selections could include "The Epic of Connie Lingus", "The Dave Maddox Chronicles", readers responses to the rape of Astoria, pieces on the state of the comics industry, or a selection of *Cerebus* drawings by you, Gerhard, the guest artists and the readers (i.e. Cerebus as Judge Dredd). Rather than being a fanzine, this kind of project would be a one issue meeting of all those who have written about *Cerebus,* or who are interested in it and judging from the popularity of the letters column, it would have a good chance of decent sales. At least, I would buy a copy.

Sincerely Yours,

Rob Hanks
1919 University Dr. N.W.
Calgary, AB
T2N 4K3

Tell you what, we'll just print up one for you in that case.

Hi, Dave!

First off, let me apologize for the handwriting. I'm a poor starving student, so I can't afford a typewriter, but I can afford comics and mail to Canada. I've got no idea why I've started writing now, I've got a pretty important exam in a few hours, and really should be cramming. Oh, well, it's a better excuse not to revise than watching crap TV.

Having started this letter, I realize I haven't really got anything to say that hasn't been said before. Oh, well, who cares. Let's roll out the cliches.

I've only been with you a few months, since a friend of mine convinced me to buy the first three issues of *Mothers and Daughters.* I was a bit mystified, but impressed enough to fork out fifteen quid for the *High Society.* Now I'm buying the collections as soon as they get into my local comics shop. Incidentally, why don't you keep the stuff from issues 51, 112, 113, 137 and 138 in print? They're a pain in the butt to find over here — I've yet to see 51, even in reprint, and I don't want to wait for the rest to come round in the bi-weeklies. Oh, and did we ever see *Free Cerebus* this side of the Atlantic?

Which reminds me — if you're ever over here, could you spare an evening to talk to WARPED, the Manchester University SF Fantasy Society? After all, Neil Gaiman's talked to us, and you wouldn't want him to be one up on you, would you? I'd offer to cover your travel costs, but Canada's a little beyond our budget.

To completely change the subject, I'll just mention Storm Constantine's excellent book, *The Monstrous Regiment.* Everyone who's shouting about "radical" feminism should read it for a vision of things taken too far along that road.

Another complete change, to risk being accused of stream of consciousness writing (or bad letter writing, which is closer to the mark). As a mathematician, I was tickled by the 'Methods of Proof' in 155's Aardvark Comment (I haven't got the issue handy, so I can't remember who wrote them). In the same vein, here's a theorem:

Proposition—
All natural numbers (0, 1, 2, 3 . . .) have some interesting and unique feature, i.e. all natural numbers are interesting.

Proof—
Interesting numbers exist — eg. 0 is the smallest natural number, 2 is the only even prime etc.

Now suppose there are some non-interesting natural numbers. By the Well-Ordering Principle (a real, honest to goodness, mathematical principle) there is some least non-interesting number. But this property (of being the least non-interesting number) is interesting and unique in itself, contradicting our assumption that this number is non-interesting. Hence, all natural numbers are interesting. QED.

The scary thing is, I can't find any holes in the argument—

Finally, I don't see why some of the correspondents in this lettercol get so heated about Marvel Comics. I tend to see them as a sort of equivalent to Schwarzenegger movies — bubble gum for the mind. Turn off your brain, sit back and enjoy the ride. Sometimes I just don't feel up to the thinking involved in reading intelligent comics.

Thinking . . . that reminds me, I've got this exam.

Weebles wobble, but they never fall down. Helicopter, Cultlefish.

Marcus Hill
Hulme Hall
Oxford Place
Manchester
England
M14 5RR

P.S. You'd better print at least some of this, it's going to cost me a fortune to get it to you.

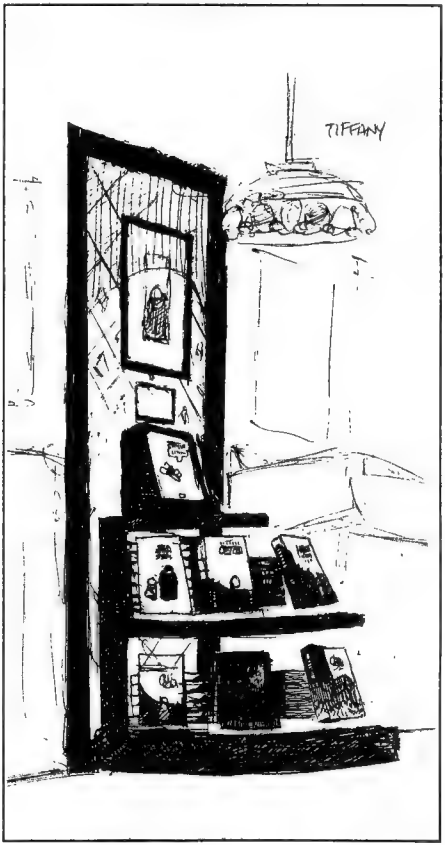
C'mon, Marcus. It cost you 39p! That's barely a nickel in US money.

★★★★★★★★★★

PROJECT: MOONDOG

A series of designs and concepts for assisting retailers in selling and promoting CEREBUS. All proto-types and tests to be conducted in the Moondog's Lincoln Park store. Those retailers interested in being included on a mailing list for plans and designs and specifications are requested to contact:

GARY COLABUONO • MOONDOG'S INC. • 1201 OAKTON STREET SUITE 1
ELK GROVE VILLAGE • ILLINOIS 60007



PHASE ONE

Free-standing Cerebus "Boutique" display. Wood frame wall mount. Three tier display. Painted to match store colour scheme. Top level slanted display for current monthly issue. Bottom two tiers to display Cerebus phone books. Cerebus art print framed with plaque below it:

"CEREBUS
26 year 300 issue
project
December 1977 to
March 2004
current issue
and
reprint volumes
to date

(name of store)"

art print provided free by Aardvark Vanaheim to stores using Boutique display

GALLERY

BELCH!

Original cover
to Amazing Heroes 201
(1991)

Cerebus pencilled and inked
by Dave Sim.
Backgrounds and colour
by Gerhard.

pen and ink
and water colour
dyes
on
water colour paper
10 X 13
minimum bid:
$200.

bidding closes
September 4, 1992
5 P.M. EST.

GALLERY

JULY 26 DETROIT

THE MARRIOTT
200 W. BIG BEAVER (TROY)

* JULY 25 • *DAVE'S COMICS (ROYAL OAK)*

AUGUST 8 TORONTO

ONLY CANADIAN STOP

* AUGUST 8 • *THE BEGUILING*

AUGUST 23 ATLANTA

CASTLEGATE HOTEL &
CONFERENCE CENTER

* AUGUST 21 • *OXFORD BOOKS*

SEPTEMBER 13 WASHINGTON

RAMADA HOTEL (FALLS CHURCH, VA.)
EXIT 10–A AT 495

* SEPTEMBER 11 • *CLOSET OF COMICS (COLLEGE PARK, MD.)*

OCTOBER 4 PHOENIX

OMNI ADAMS HOTEL
111 NORTH CENTRAL AVE.

* OCTOBER 3 • *ATOMIC COMICS (MESA)*

OCTOBER 18 SEATTLE

THE RED LION HOTEL
18740 PACIFIC HWY. SOUTH

* OCTOBER 16 • *ZANADU COMICS (DOWNTOWN)*
* OCTOBER 17 • *ZANADU COMICS (UNIVERSITY DISTRICT)*

NOVEMBER 1 PORTLAND

THE MARRIOTT
1401 SW FRONT STREET

* OCTOBER 31 • *FUTURE DREAMS (EAST BURNSIDE)*

NOVEMBER 15 NEW YORK

RAMADA HOTEL 33RD & 7TH

* NOVEMBER 13 • *JIM HANLEY'S UNIVERSE (W. 32ND STREET)*
* NOVEMBER 14 • *JIM HANLEY'S UNIVERSE (STATEN ISLAND)*

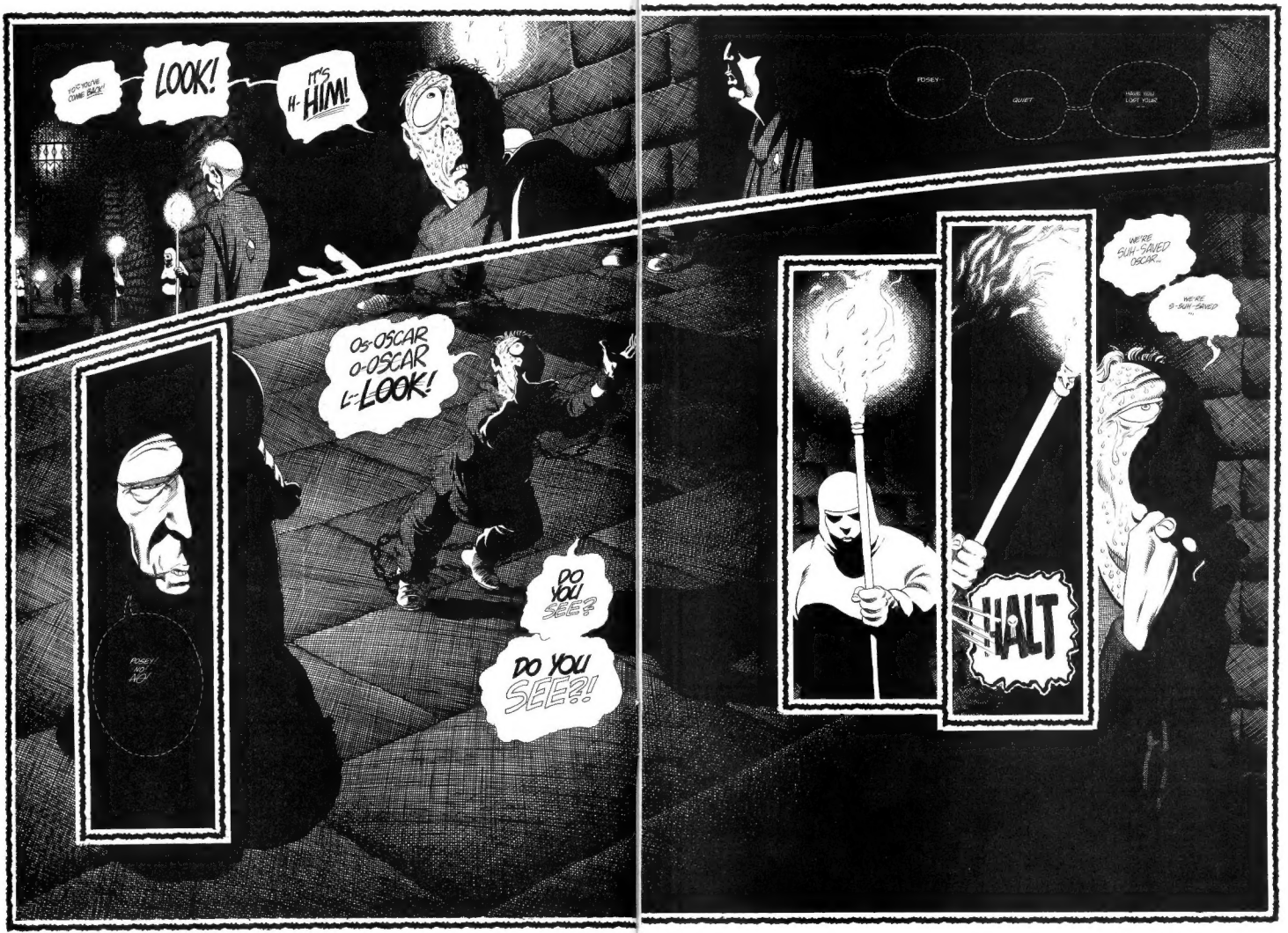
DECEMBER 15 HOUSTON

SHERATON GRAND
WESTHEIMER EXIT AT I–610

* DECEMBER 11 • *PAPER HEROES (KILLEEN)*

TO BE ANNOUNCED: **CLEVELAND**

Contact
GREAT EASTERN CONVENTIONS
(908) 788-6845
for details


YOU'VE COME BACK!
LOOK!
IT'S H-HIM!
POSEY...
QUIET
HAVE YOU LOST YOUR...
WE'RE SUH-SAVED OSCAR...
WE'RE S-SUH-SAVED...
HALT
POSEY, NO, AG!
Os-OSCAR
o-OSCAR
L--LOOK!
DO YOU SEE?
DO YOU SEE?!